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AN ESSAY ON THE FORCE OF IMAGINATION.

WITH AN

ODE TO CHARITY.

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A N

E S S A Y

ON THE

Force of IMAGINATION.

FANCY! --- thy wond'rous Power be my Theme; ---
Thou Sourſe of Joys ideal, --- and of Pains,
Which, tho' at Eaſe, thy Vot'ries ſeem to feel.
Thy univerſal Sway Mankind muſt own,
The higheſt Monarch, and the meaneſt Slave;
The Idiot, and the philoſophic Sage;
The Rich, the Poor, --- Mortals of all Degrees,
To thee --- deluſive Phantom; Homage yield.
Thy Inſpirations Reaſon oft dethrones,
Diſſolves the ſolid Thought, and fills the Mind

With

With painted Bubbles — Caſtles built in Air. —
When dawning Reaſon breaks upon the Soul,
Expands Ideas, — budding Thought matures, —
Fancy delights, directs, begins to reign;
Calls forth the Infants Wiſh for gilded Toys
Of various kinds, its Hours to beguile;
Which once poſſeſs'd, it ardent ſeeks for new.

In fanciful Amuſements the firſt Years
Glide ſwiftly on: — Ah! dear, regretted Time!
Sweet vernal Seaſon! — When oppreſſive Cares,
The Lot of riper Age, are quite unknown:
When all around is calm, and ſeems to wear
A pleaſant Aſpect, and unclouded Brow.

Fancy grows ſtronger as the Years advance;
Teaches the gay and ſanguine Youth, to form
Romantic Notions of untainted Joy,
Of perfect Bliſs in this uncertain State,
This ſublunary, fluctuating World.
To different Views Imagination points,

But

But all its various Schemes are in purſuit
Of Happineſs, unfading, unalloy'd:
Like to the Hydra's Head, our Wiſhes are,
The Death of one gives to another Birth.
Aſk young PHILANDER, who, for many Years,
Purſu'd the fair AMANDA with his Love,
And after many Efforts won the Prize, —
If now, in what he thought the choiceſt Gift
That Heaven in its Goodneſs could beſtow,
Felicity he finds, without a Thought,
A Wiſh for ſomething more. — He would reply,
" Alas! — I ſcarce can taſte the preſent Good;
" My Days and Nights embitter'd are, and ſad; —
" I walk around the Village, and behold
" The lab'ring Peaſants view with ſparkling Eyes,
" Their numerous Offspring — Lovely, ſmiling Tribe! —
" Enraptur'd to their broken Accents liſt,
" Or claſp the Infants in a fond Embrace;
" While I theſe ſweet Senſations cannot know,
" And to a Father's Pleaſures live eſtrang'd."

Thus he laments, and impiouſly repines;
Reflects not once that his Deſire fulfil'd,
With Sorrows barbed Darts might pregnant prove.

How oft we ſee the Fair, at gay Sixteen, —
Unthinking Period! — Flatt'ring Pictures draw
Of Pleaſure, in a varied tempting Dreſs; —
By ſome pourtray'd in Love's alluring Form,
While others doat on blazon'd Grandeur's Charms,
Ennobled Titles, and large Funds of Wealth.
Of different Kind, the airy gay Coquet
Forms a Deſign, delineates a Piece;
She ſighs for Conqueſt, wiſhes to enſlave,
And, in Imagination, views a Train
Of wounded Lovers kneeling at her Feet: ---
Hence her affected Smile, and am'rous Glance,
To lacerate but never Balm afford;
Efforts to pleaſe, unceaſing Care in Dreſs ---
Each Ornament to beſt Advantage plac'd,
The Waſh coſmetic us'd, the Rouge apply'd, ---

The graceful Geſture practis'd at the Glaſs,
The ſoft Addreſs, and Artifice refin'd ; ---
Reſembling Iris, thus the high born Maid
Reſorts to Balls, Ridotto's, Routs and Drums ;
Each Place frequented by the modiſh Crew,
And indiſcriminate throws out her Shafts : ---
All of this Caſt, in Station high or low,
For Conqueſt ſigh, Airs ſimilar affect.

The ruſtic Girl, when dancing on the Green,
With Mien erect trips on, exulting looks,
Conſcious of Beauty and extenſive Power ;
At Intervals, delighted, hears the Swains,
Complaining, call her cruel and unkind,
And envies not the Belles in higher Sphere.

Fancy's Suggeſtions ſteels the Parents Heart
When to old Age and Av'rice they conſign
Their Daughters, in the Pride and Bloom of Youth,
And at the ſacred Altar force their Vows
Aſſent by Voice to what the Soul abhors ;

Congra-

Congratulate the Victims on their Bliſs,
Accounting Wealth, Eclat, and ſplendid Glare,
Pomp and Parade, the chiefeſt Good in Life;
But find their high-rais'd Expectation cruſh'd,
When Death or Infamy their Offspring ſeize: ---
Theſe oft ſucceed to ſuch Hymeneal Bands,
Union of Hands, without the ſtronger Tie
Of pure Affection, on the Baſis built
Of mutual Friendſhip, and a true Eſteem. ---

But you, ye Fair! --- Who in your Spring have fall'n
A Sacrifice to Duty's ſtern Commands;
Who with heroic Patience bear the Yoke
Of an imperious, hated, Huſband's Sway;
Some Mark of high Diſtinction ye deſerve: ---
Tho' ALEXANDER met oppoſing Foes,
Dauntleſs, intrepid, braving Dangers --- Death ---
And by his Valour laſting Laurels gain'd ---
Yet he --- this mighty Conqueror --- was a Slave
To headſtrong Paſſions and interior Jars: ---

Than ALEXANDER, greater far are thoſe
Who bend the ſtubborn Will --- ſubdue the Heart,
And ſmother each wrong Impulſe in the Birth : —
Then let a civick Crown adorn their Brows,
Conſpicuous ſhew, and eternize their Fame. —

Ye nice Diſcerners, ſkill'd in Nature's Book,
Who ſtudiouſly do living Volumes read ! —
Say, — Does not FANCY give to Folly birth,
And gild the Thorns with which the Paths of Vice
Are plenteous ſtrew'd ; — veiling its Horrors with
A pleaſing Form, a fair and beauteous Maſk ?

The old AVARO graſp'd a maſs of Gold, —
Some Thouſands, which, in Coffers ſtrong, were cloſe
Secur'd ; --- his very Soul in theſe contain'd —
To feaſt his Eyes oft thither he repair'd : —
Once as indulging thus, he Silence broke —
" Ah ! lovely Treaſure ! --- Comfort of my Life ! ---
" Fair glitt'ring Piles --- rich Cordials to my Heart ---
" Ye muſt increaſe to make me truly bleſt ;

" To raiſe ten Thouſand more I yet muſt toil ;
" That once attain'd, I ſoon will bid adieu
" To all the Tumults of the buſy Town,
" And taſte the Golden Age in ſome Retreat,
" Far from the Noiſe and Hurry of the World ;
" Herbs eſculent, and Roots, ſhall be my Food ;
" My Liquor --- Water from the chryſtal Spring, ---
" Far more delicious than the Sparkling Juice,
" So much eſteem'd, extracted from the Vine. ---
" Great Nature's Garden, the capacious Fields,
" Will Exerciſe, Amuſement, Health afford :
" Thus parſimonious, my beloved Wealth
" Will undiminiſh'd lay : --- Delightful Thought !
" But Ah ! --- A time will come when I muſt quit
" My ſweet Aſylum, --- leave my darling Store ; ---
" When I no more can view its dazling Charms : ---
" Then ſhall it purchaſe for me Honour, Fame ;
" Whoſe eagle-wing'd, and far diſtending Blaſts,
" Shall gain me Praiſe --- immortalize my Name :
" All I poſſeſs ſhall be conſign'd, to build

" A noble

" A noble Structure for the Sick and Maim'd,
" Amply endow'd, till Time ſhall be no more." ---
He ceas'd to ſpeak, --- and on his Idol gaz'd —
Abſorb'd, enraptur'd, loſt in Cogitation,
When Reaſon whiſper'd —— Fooliſh Man, diſcard
Fantaſtic Whims, Chimeras of the Brain: ---
What's Fame or Honour to a lump of Clay? —
Whene'er the purple Stream ſhall ceaſe to flow,
The Judgment and Opinion of the World, —
Its Cenſure or Applauſe, thou wilt not know: —
Then — while you may — the Affluence Heaven hath lent,
Reſtricted by fair Virtue, freely uſe,
To cheer your Soul, to ſooth declining Age, —
In Acts benificent, without a Glare;
Well-guided, large Donations, oft diſpenſe
The Widow's plaintive Sighs — the Orphan's Tears,
The Anguiſh of the needy Poor, ſuppreſs; —
And thus obtain a Treaſure paſt decay. —
AVARO ſtarted, — as one juſt awoke
From balmy Slumbers, yielding pleaſant Dreams;

Seem'd

Seem'd like a Being void of mental Pow'r,
Till FANCY's Rhetoric the Aſcendant gain'd,
Subdu'd the Monitor — reign'd Victor ſole. —
At length the wiſh-for Sum completion reach'd;
AVARO, much elate, commenc'd Recluſe, —
But liv'd unbleſs'd: — Serenity of Soul,
Content, — ſweet Emanation! — Ray divine! —
Was from his Breaſt eſtrang'd; ſeiz'd by ſtrong Fears
Leſt ſome Deſpoiler, boldly ſhou'd invade
His poor Abode defenceleſs, and with Force,
Bear off the golden Hoard, more dear than Life.
Hence was each Day embitter'd and diſturb'd,
The Nights terrific more than Words can paint.
Midſt of theſe Pangs th' eternal Fiat paſs'd; —
Unwarn'd, AVARO, ſeiz'd by conq'ring Death,
To Life, and Things terreſtrial, bid adieu: —
His Will unſign'd, a Niece, forlorn and poor,
Who long had liv'd in Poverty extreme,
Pining for ſecret Want, was Heireſs ſole
To his Poſſeſſions large, by legal Right. —

FANCY oft raiſes Spectres, Demons, Fiends,
Which once receiv'd, inceſſant haunt the Mind,
For Months, for Years, or to the final Change:
Elſe why CLEANTHES, doſt thou waſte thy Days
In dreary ſullen Gloom, or mad'ning Rage?
Suſpect thy youthful, fair and virtuous Spouſe,
Whoſe Heart — untainted with deceitful Wiles,
Or Wiſh, that ſtricteſt Virtue might not own,
From Principle moſt pure — appears to thee
Perfidious, black, infernal, full of Guile:
The green-ey'd Monſter every Look ſubverts,
Each innocent Expreſſion deems a Proof
Of broken Faith, and her conſummate Guilt.
Oft FLAVIA views with Dread, th' impending Storm,
Portended in CLEANTHES' flaſhing Eye,
His quiv'ring Lip and agitated Frame:
Unable to articulate, he ſtands,
Until the pent-up Fury burſts its Way. —
The gentle Suff'rer patient waits a Calm,
Swears and proteſts — a Moment gains Belief,

And in his Boſom rears a pleaſing Hope,
Which inſtantaneous vaniſhes in Air.
Thus paſs the circling Years in poignant Woe:
Unhappy Pair! — from viſionary Cauſe,
What ſad Effects we feel — what real Grief!

And what but FANCY at the midnight Hour,
In loneſome Walks gives Birth to Thoughts horrific?
Or Dread at paſſing through the ſolemn Ground,
Repoſitory Calm for ſleeping Clay —
The monitory Manſions of the Dead:
Leſt ſome poor Ghoſt perturb'd ſhould there reſort,
Nocturnal walk its Round in ghaſtly Form.
The Village Swain, and timid trembling Maid,
Too long detain'd by rural ruſtic Sports,
Far from their Home, till ſable Night's advanc'd,
Return in Trepidation through the Meads,
And feel ſtrong Terror thrilling thro' each Vein;
The crimſon Dye of Health draws from each Cheek;
The purple Tide faſt ebbing to the Heart
At every Breeze that ſhakes the nodding Elms,

And ſpreads a gentle Ruſtling thro' the Woods.
But if perchance a Native of the Fields,
A white Quadruped in the Path ſhould ſtand;
By FANCY chang'd — it ſeems erect and wan,
Enrapp'd with Linen Folds; — ſcar'd and diſmay'd
They turn, — a wide Excurſion ſwiftly make,
To ſhun the dreadful Spot, — torpid with Fear. —
At length, to Home arriv'd, — the frightful Tale
Unto a wond'ring Audience is declar'd, —
Depicted ſtrong — ſinks deeply in their Minds: —
Soon of this Prodigy the Village rings,
Which to Poſterity is handed down,
In Winter Evenings o'er the chearful Blaze. —

FANCY's Perſpective to the young Divine
A Mitre ſhews — the Center of his Hope, —
And in *futuro* marks it as his own: —
To that he thinks to find a pervious Road,
Till theſe fallacious Notions Time corrects. —
Thro' that the Eſculapian Pupils look;
The Law-bred Students; and aſpiring Youths

Of martial Diſpoſition uſe it much : —
The firſt the higheſt Honours of the Robe,
By due Degrees, in Time expect to gain ;
The laſt a Truncheon, Honour and Renown. ---

FANCY, o'er Features of the coarſeſt Kind,
Can ſpread a vivid Grace --- a beauteous Glow - -
Or whence the Raptures of the Parent fond,
When with extatic Joy ſhe views her Babe,
And thinks its Nature's beſt and faireſt Work ;
Which to the Eye impartial, plain appears,
Without Pretenſions to a ſingle Charm. ---
And hence the Valetudinarians ills : ---
The Virtuoſo's Ardour to poſſeſs
Min'rals and Foſſils, Medals and Antiques,
Uncommon Reptiles, Inſects, Things groteſque.

The Lunatic in dreary Cell confin'd,
Depriv'd of Day's bright Lamp, and wholeſome Air,
Melting the Heart, of ſoft Materials form'd,
With ſympathizing Pity for his Caſe ---

Raiſing

Raiſing the gentle Sigh and pitying Tear ---
(A kind yet unavailing Tribute paid,
By thoſe with Senſibility endow'd,
To every Individual's hapleſs Lot,
From loſs of Reaſon, Fortune, Friends or Health,
Or other Cauſe from whence Repoſe is loſt:
Ah! — ſweet Senſation! — tho' commix'd with Pain,
Noble Perception, — which a ſelfiſh Soul
Can never feel, nor once deſire to Taſte.)
Proud and Majeſtic ſits in fancy'd State,
Diſcerns not the Emotions he has caus'd: —
Believes his tatter'd Rags Imperial Robes,
His Bed a Throne — the Spider's fine-ſpun Web,
Productions curious of the Perſian Loom —
And all within the narrow Priſon ſeems
Royalty's Enſigns — Pagants of a Court.

And what but FANCY when the Orb of Day
Darts in the Ocean on the Weſtern Sky
Unveil'd with duſky Clouds, a Landſcape paints,

The ſubtle Ether, from reflected Light,
Receives reſplendant, varegated Tints.
Attracted by the lovely Scene, we oft
Thro' Fancy's Inſtigations do perceive
An Ærial Country of a vaſt Extent,
Cities and Villas, Hills and verdant Vales,
Wild ſandy Deſerts, ſpiral Mountains high,
Or black and barren, or o'erſpread with Snow:
Ships on the Ocean, Fountains, Rivers, Lakes,
Thick ſhady Groves, and gentle ſloping Lawns,
Inhabitants of Earth, or Sea, or Air;
Exact proportion'd ſome, and ſome deform'd,
Contraſts the View, until the Rays of Light
Declining faſt, ſhews every Object leſs: —
Soon flies the Viſion, and the burniſh'd Gold
Is chang'd into the Hue of Orient Pearl,
And each bright Colour to a charming Tinge,
Till Twilight grey, obliterates the Whole. —

When balmy Sleep our weary Eyelids cloſe,
Reaſon reſigns her Office — Fancy leads

The Mind thro' Mazes intricate and large,
And Images ſurprizing fill the Brain:
Some in a dreary doleful Dungeon mourn,
Or ſuffer Shipwreck, with the Seas contend,
Or climb the Rock, or in the Ocean ſink;
And on their downy Pillows feel each Pang
That from the real Woes of Life reſult.
Others expatiate midſt gay fairy Fields
All joyous — till the powerful Charm diſſolves.

How FANCY actuates the human Heart —
Its various Operations on the Mind
Of every Individual, to deſcribe
My Efforts fail; — too Lofty is the Taſk: —
All ye who to its gay Enchantments yield,
And in the Shape of Pleaſure, Vice purſue,
Mount on its Wings, and ſoar with rapid Flight;
Beware — leaſt like ICARUS, ye ſhould fall,
Plunge in a fatal Gulph to raiſe no more. —
And ye who through Imaginations Strength,
In Plenty pine — without a Cauſe complain,

In undelightful Thoughts and Diſcontent
Brood Melancholy, joyleſs and depreſs'd: —
Expel the Poiſon, e're offended Heaven
In Juſtice pours on your devoted Heads
Misfortunes real — worſe than thoſe ye fear. —
When Fancy only tends to ſooth and pleaſe,
Nor controverts fair Virtue, or her Cauſe; —
Reaſon depreciates not: — Receive the Friend,
Imbibe the Balm, — ſweet Antidote to Care,
To ſmooth the rugged thorny Paths of Life.

O D E

TO

C H A R I T Y.

RETir'd from Noiſe, from buſy Life,
Domeſtic Jars, and public Strife,
My Soul be unperturb'd:
I would expatiate on a Theme,
Oppoſite to the num'rous Train
Of Paſſions wild, uncurb'd.
Begone ye buſy, reſtleſs Tribe,
Malignant Foes to Peace of Mind:
Ceaſe, ceaſe to fluctuate like the Tide,
For know ye will Reſiſtance find:
But, ah! --- Reſiſtance, though it may reſtrain,
The ſly Intruders cannot long enchain. —

O Charity! — 'tis thine to move
The human Heart — for thou art Love —
To feel a Fellow-Creature's Woe,
And cauſe the pitying Drops to flow:
Thou bid'ſt the Hand ſtretch forth and cheer
The Widow's Soul; — and dry the Tear
Diſtilling from the Orphan's Eye;
To ceaſe the Wretched's plaintive Cry:
Beam in the Breaſt a Ray of Joy,
Where Grief has met with no Alloy: —
Through tedious Periods of revolving Years,
By Want embitter'd, and its Train of Cares,
Thy aid, bright Virtue! — oft can put to Flight
Deſpair, and ſet the doubting Mind aright.

The Injur'd by thy Precepts taught,
With no revengeful Views are fraught;
Calmly they bear egregious Wrongs,
Patience oppoſe to pois'nous Tongues:
Contemptuous Looks, Oppreſſion, Scorn,
Inſult and Pride are meekly borne;

Black Envy cannot deeply Wound
The Heart, where Charity is found;
Whoſe heav'nly Dictates form a Prayer for thoſe
Who are in Word and Deed profeſſed Foes:
O! nobleſt Gem that can adorn the Mind!
What various Graces are in thee combin'd!—

Hail Emanation!—Ray divine!
Whoſe Works ſhall live, and radiant ſhine,
When this ſtupendious Frame
Shall be diſſolv'd, in Aſhes lie,
This beauteous, azure, ſpangled Sky,
A vivid, awful Flame.
When ancient Time ſhall be no more,
Its precious Hours for ever fled,
And every ſecret Reſervoir,
In Earth or Sea muſt yield its Dead,
Who inſtantaneous, at our God's Command,
Will take their priſtine Form,—before him ſtand.

Jeſus,

Jeſus, the Co-eternal God,
Co-eval when this Earth he trod:
Lo! then was Charity portray'd,
Its various Parts his Life diſplay'd:
To that a Saviour's Acts incite,
To that his Promiſes invite: —
But ah! weak Mortals Droſs purſue
Too oft, and real Good eſchew;
Delight in Glitter, Pomp, and Shew,
Slighting the purer Joys that flow
From Virtues, which, tho' diff'ring in the Name,
And to the View, yet is their Source the ſame;
All Links of one great Chain, to Peace they tend,
Pointing unto a great and glorious End. —

By Faith, the Soul ſwift wings her Flight;
Beholds her God in Realms of Light,
Yet darkly through a Veil:
Hope cheers us when by Grief oppreſs'd,
When poignant Anguiſh heaves the Breaſt,
When earthly Comforts fail,

In

In theſe Self only leads the Thought;
Not ſo, if Charity preſides;
When by its noble Leſſon taught,
Love reigns, and ſelfiſh Views ſubſides: —
Save the warm Wiſh to feel the pleaſing Glow,
Which from Beneficence will ever flow;
A Pleaſure which no Words can e'er define,
A ſweet Senſation, rapturous, divine.

F I N I S.